

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, December 22, 2019

Sunday before Christmas

- TROPARION OF THE PREFEAST, Tone 4:

Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, for the tree of life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the divine fruit: If we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

- TROPARION OF THE ANCESTORS, Tone Two:

Great are the achievements of faith. In the fountain of flames as in refreshing water, the three holy Children rejoiced. And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ Go, save our souls.

- KONTAKION OF THE FOREFEAST, Tone Three:

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the angels and the shepherds now glorify Him, Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child, Who before the ages is God.



ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Friday, Dec. 20: 7:30 AM, Matins for the Pre-Feast of Nativity
11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Pre-Feast Vespers
- Saturday, Dec. 21: 3:30 PM, Catechism, *On the Church and the Virgin*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions / Youth Choir Caroling
- Sunday, Dec. 22: 8:30 AM, Matins
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
1:15 PM, Pre-Feast Vespers
2:30 PM, Baptism (*child of Adina and Emmanuel*)
- Monday, Dec. 23: 7:30 AM, Matins for the Pre-Feast of Nativity
Decoration of Church after Matins
11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Royal Hours
- Tuesday, Dec. 24: 11:30 AM, Vespereal Liturgy
6 PM, Festal Matins for Nativity
- Wednesday, Dec. 25: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for Christmas
- Thursday, Dec. 26: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis of the Theotokos
- Saturday, Dec. 28: 5 PM, Great Vespers

- Sunday, Dec. 29: 8:30 AM, Matins
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, Agape Meal

- TIME FOR SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

Christ is born! Glorify Him! We are in the final days of preparing for the Feast of the Birth of Christ. It is appropriate and proper for us—priests and people together—to make a Confession prior to receiving Holy Communion on all feast days, but especially before Christmas. *It is not appropriate for anyone over seven years of age to receive Holy Communion without a recent Confession.* Our bishops teach that if we receive Holy Communion frequently, **and we should each week**, we should be confessing no less than once a month. Let us all make our Confession prior to Christmas Day, so that we may receive Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve and Day united in Christ. Consult the list above for the frequent times when Confessions are heard. —*Fr. Lawrence*

- PRE-CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

The demands of work, family, holiday preparations along with morning and evening routines the week before Christmas present many challenges. Nevertheless, I invite you to set aside some time to join me at the Pre-Feast Services this week and next (see schedule). Gathering as the Church, let us enjoy the profound hymnography. May God grant us the experience of calming and cleansing silence found in the approach to the spiritual Cave in Bethlehem during this **Winter Holy Week**. —*Fr. Lawrence*

- O COME, O COME, SILENCER OF KINGS AND TREE OF LIFE:

December 19th's Antiphon [from a Latin hymnal, [audio file here](#)]: *O Root of Jesse, which standest as a sign to the peoples, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, whom the gentiles shall beseech, come to deliver, delay thou not!*

The Prophecies: *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1;10)*

So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. (Isaiah 52:15)

This last prophecy about the silence of kings before the Suffering Servant, reminds us of one truth about this Messianic Root of Jesse, which is depicted and summarized in each Jesse Tree: God Incarnate has a human genealogy. His real human flesh, is connected generation to generation back to Eve. The human flesh of Jesus, Root of Jesse, was scourged, beaten, spit upon, nailed to the Cross, pierced by a spear, and wrapped in linen and buried in a tomb. We are saved because all this was done to him who is both God and Man, whom death could not contain. His Cross has become a new Tree of Life for us. The Root of Jesse came to plant a Family Tree, of which he is the head, the First Born of the dead. We, ingrafted, as adopted sons of God, are members of a new family, members of the Body of Christ. In light of this sure destiny for Man, all the proud plans of emperors, kings, tyrants, presidents, and prime ministers, as well as the schemes of the captains of industry, the princes of commerce, and the purveyors of art, will fade, forgotten as passing dreams in the night. All shall bend the knee to the One lifted up. —*James Kushiner*

A HYMN OF THE PREFEAST OF CHRISTMAS

Let us celebrate, O ye people,
the fore-feast of the nativity of Christ,
let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlehem,
and let us see the great mystery in the cave;
for Eden hath been opened and God hath come forth
from the pure Virgin,
being perfect in both humanity and divinity.
Therefore, let us cry aloud:
Holy God, the Father who hath no beginning!
Holy Mighty, the Son made flesh!
Holy Immortal, the Comforting Spirit!
O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!

- CHRISTMAS DAY PRAYER:

O Master, Christ our God, Who from before all ages didst shine forth from the Father without passion, and in the latter days wast ineffably incarnate and born of the most holy Virgin; Who for our sakes wast made poor, that by Thy poverty we might be enriched; Who wast wrapped in swaddling clothes as an infant, and laid in a manger, yet as God possessest all things: Thyself accept our humble prayers and praises, as Thou didst the Shepherds' songs of praise and the gifts and homage of the Magi. Make us to be like unto the heavenly Host praising Thee in hymns, Who art born on earth; Show us to be heirs of the eternal joy prepared for those that worthily honor Thy Nativity. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians, uphold Thy Churches, Thy priests and all Thy people. For Thou art God that lovest mankind, and art glorified, together with Thine unoriginate Father, and Thine all-holy, and Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

- CHURCH CLEANING:

After Pascha I posted a weekly sign-up sheet on the post by the front door for those who wanted to clean the church. Overall, from then until now, blank slots outnumbered sign-ups. It seems clear that the sign-up list is not effective for us—perhaps there is a better way (especially as we approach the holidays and then Lent). So, let's try something besides a sign-up list, and see if we can get the job done. Maybe someone in the parish can take on the task—we might even call it a *ministry*—for scheduling Church clean ups. I'm open to suggestions.—*Fr Lawrence*

- THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM:

If wealth is the measure of success, it would imply that the poor are losers. The Gospel of Luke responds to this: the Cross is the absolute answer to Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' and Nietzsche's 'will to power.'

—*Fr Patrick Reardon, All Saints Orthodox Church, Chicago*

- ANGELS UNAWARES:

Our guests from the Redwood Gospel Mission will arrive about 6 PM on Thursday, January 2, and depart about 6:30 AM on Friday morning. Dinner will be served on Thursday as they arrive, and then the Hall will be cleared for them to set up places to sleep. Usually we have about 20–25 guests. Volunteers are needed from 4–8 PM. Any questions call Michael or Rachel Dovey at (707) 799-4117. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them who suffer adversity..." (*Hebrews 13*).

- THEOPHANY:

The Feast of the Baptism of the Savior is celebrated on January 6. It is the Twelfth Day of Christmas, and the day in which the Church in ancient times celebrated Christmas and Theophany together as one feast of the manifestation of God incarnate. Theophany, also called Epiphany, begins with the Royal Hours (comprised of Psalms, hymns, Old Testament and New Testament readings) on Friday, January 3 at 6 PM. Vespers on Saturday evening at 5 PM with the Canon of the Prefeast; Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, Jan. 5 at 10 AM, followed by the first Great Blessing of Water and blessing of the grounds and buildings; Matins of the Feast on Sunday evening at 5 PM; Liturgy on Monday, January 6 at 9 AM. This year I plan to do the second Great Blessing of Water outdoors—weather permitting. There is a lovely freshwater stream and waterfall (that flows into Bodega Bay) behind the Bodega Bay Inn, which is owned by Ted Dechant. He has invited us to do our water blessing there. So, Lord willing, after Liturgy here on Jan. 6th, I will drive to the Inn, and set up for a blessing. Please join me there at 1:30 PM.

- HOUSE BLESSINGS:

A sign up list will be posted on January 1 for House Blessings. The late Archpriest John Udics reminds us that "on the Feast of the Parish or the Feast of Theophany [January 6] we rededicate our home for its original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast of Theophany because this is

the day on which we remember in the Church Year the coming of Christ who began His Ministry when He descended into Jordan to be baptized by Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must ‘repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.’ An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Christian Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals, clothing and all objects which are used in our daily lives for the good of man. In this the Church expresses its faith that the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying action extends over the whole Creation.”

• INFLUENCE FOR FAITH:

It is the parents who practice their faith sincerely, pray consistently, that are the major influencers related to adolescents keeping their faith into their 20s... Just 1%—one percent—of teens aged 15–20 who were raised by parents who attached little importance to their religion were highly religious in their mid to late 20s. But by contrast—and this is important—82% of children raised by parents who prayed regularly, spoke about their faith at home, attached great importance to their beliefs, and were active in their congregations or parishes were themselves religiously active as young adults. —*Kevin Allen, Orthodox Institute 2015*

• THE HUMILITY OF GOD:

“There was no place at the inn.” But there was a place in the stable and in the manger. The inn is a place where public opinion reaches its stormy heights, the center of earthly moods, the meeting place for the people of the world, the popular ones, the achievers. The stable and the manger are the place for the despised, the rejected, the forgotten ones. If the world would truly expect the Birth of Christ, it would naturally look for Him at an inn. The stable and the manger would have been the last place they would look for Him. This is exactly why they don’t find Him. The Divine is always there where only few hope to find Him. The incarnate Son of God had to enter His own world not through the front entrance but from the back door, the servants’ door. He was born in a cave under the earth, and laid in a manger—the feeding trough for the animals. There, He shook the earth to its foundations. He was born in a cave; therefore, all who come to Him must stoop, thus signifying their humility. The proud ones refuse to stoop down, and, therefore, pass by and miss God. However, those who know how to humble their ego, DO stoop down and enter, and suddenly find themselves not in a cave but in a new universe, where the Child sits in His mother’s lap and His frail Child’s fingers rule the whole world. —*Mitred Archbishop George Benigsen, broadcast to Russia over Radio Liberty on January 7, 1987*



FEAST OF ST. SERAPHIM ~ JANUARY 2

ON JANUARY 2 we commemorate the repose of our parish patron, Saint Seraphim of Sarov. The celebration begins at 5 PM on New Year’s Day, January 1, with Great Vespers, followed by the Akathist for St. Seraphim. On January 2, we will greet Archbishop Benjamin and Bishop Daniel at 9:30 and begin the Divine Liturgy. All are invited to a festive lunch following the Liturgy.